



Teala, Nikola
Seventh Chapter
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Seventh Chapter.

What my uncle Herse said and what my ~~uncle~~ Herse was; and why Fritz Sahlmann had to whistle.

When the watchmaker was taken down the castle hill, Fritz Sahlmann had, of course, gone along, only in order to see how the thing became the prisoner and if he would not perhaps escape, but the latter did not come to pass. The procession moved slowly down to the town-hall, for it had to wind its way troublesome through all sorts of teams and wagons, which had been commanded from the villages and the town for the transportation of baggage and booty and were now drifting together in the castle-court and on the road to the castle and surrounded by Frenchmen, that they might not again escape, for the old farmers were already devilish smart ^{at} this game. - The watchmaker went along with his two guardians, patient as a lamb and also perfectly calm, for though he had been greatly frightened at first and although the whole affair of last night was very disagreeable and serious for him, during the examination which the adjutant had instituted with him he had come into a frame of mind, which might be described as: "Yes, you talk on! You may say a great deal before a word of it will please me," and his answers had turned out very chary. And although he had not in him that wild courage which immediately goes for everything, he had already been too long in the world and been in a scrape so often, that he did not immediately despair. He let things come as

they may. "I wonder how this is going to ~~end~~" he said to himself, when he was pushed into the door of the town-hall. -

"Fritz Sahlmann", said ~~alderman~~ Herse to the boy, when he wanted to go up to the castle again, "what does this mean?" - Fritz Sahlmann tells with the greatest importance the story of yesterday, and that Mr. Droi had slept in Mamselle Westphalian's room and had broken up everything and how he himself had dropped and broken the chief-magistrate's pipe, -but he could not help it, it was Fiken's fault- and that the colonel had wanted to stab the chief magistrate and how Mamselle Westphalian was sitting in the kitchen, a picture of despair; but about the lump of ice he said nothing.

Now my uncle, ~~alderman~~ Herse, was immensely patriotic, even if only in secret. And that had its reason. For as he whispered to me long years afterward, when Bonaparte was already dead, he used to belong at this time to the League of Virtue. And I do believe him, because when he was in company he would always play with a long watch chain of very light hair - and aunt Herse's was black - and he would always show a dangerously big iron ring finger ring, with which he had one time almost beaten that vagabond Huepner, a journeyman locksmith, to death, when he had behaved in a very impolite manner in the court room. - "Fritz", he said to me later, "this hair is from a heroic maiden, who anno thirteen had

her head shorn for the fatherland, and this iron ring has cost me my gold one. But do not speak of it, I do not like it." Therefore he was at the time when this story happened, with good reason much for secrecy. It is possible, too, that his way and manner of looking over everything together from a distant point of view had much to do with his leaning towards secrecy, for while my father had to harrass himself day and night with the most trifling drudgery and toil, in order that the little old needy community might barely remain hanging together and would not go to pieces ~~witngsicher~~ entirely, ~~alderman~~ Herse would let Kutosow march to the right and Czernitchew to the left, praise York and scold about Buelow, he did not understand his business, for he should not have moved to Berlin, but to the right as far as Stemhagen and rushed into Bonaparte's flank. In short, he was just the right sort of a man to turn a sneeze into a thunderclap: in every innocent French corporal he saw a Corsican tyrant, and if on some blue Monday at a workmen's row constable Luth had received a few blows too, then he would carry on, as if the Duke of Mecklenburg had been treated to a slap in the face.

"Hold your tongue, boy!" ~~alderman~~ Herse whispered very seriously, "do you want to cry out your death sentence here in the public market place? - For the watchmaker's life I would not give a single Groschen, because it is certain that the miller and his Frederick have killed the chasseur ..." - "Not the miller", Fritz.